

request for conference, and the Presiding Officer appoint the following conferees: Senators GRASSLEY, ALEXANDER, HATCH, SESSIONS, LEAHY, MURRAY, and WYDEN.

#### WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I have fought for years to protect our Nation's seniors from abuse and exploitation—initially, in my capacity as former chairman of the Senate Aging Committee and more recently as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Last Wednesday was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, but because the Democrats were unfortunately blocking the business of the American people on the Senate floor, I was unable to give this statement, so I want to take this opportunity today to express my renewed commitment to ending the abuse and exploitation of older Americans.

We don't know the full extent and scope of the problem of elder abuse, mainly due to underreporting.

Many older Americans don't report instances of elder abuse due to embarrassment, a refusal to acknowledge that they were victimized, or reliance on the perpetrator as their caretaker.

But we do know that serious cases of abuse or exploitation of older Americans seem to be increasing and that it can take several forms: financial, physical, and emotional.

Financial exploitation is the most widespread form of elder abuse, costing seniors in the U.S. between an estimated \$2.9 and \$36 billion annually. In fact, it is been called "the crime of the 21st century."

In my home State of Iowa, for example, so-called grandparent scams are becoming more prevalent. Fraudsters initiating a grandparent scam will present themselves to a senior citizen as a grandchild in distress, in the hope of convincing the grandparent to immediately send cash or give out a credit card number.

Another common scam in Iowa is the sweetheart scam, in which criminals cultivate a romantic relationship with a lonely elder, typically online, and then convince the senior to part with their hard-earned money.

Across the United States, con artists reportedly are also using sweepstakes scams to steal money. A senior is called and told they have won some great prize or sum of money, but before they can claim the supposed prize, the victim is required to pay taxes or processing fees. Once the money is paid to cover the taxes and fees, however, no prize ever materializes.

Other instances of elder financial exploitation are more personal in nature and have especially devastating effects. Some victims are pressured into signing over a deed, modifying a will, or giving a power of attorney. Americans have lost their farms, homes, and life savings to this form of fraud. In Iowa,

we have recently revised our laws to protect against these types of abuse, and I will be doing what I can to raise awareness to help stop this nationwide.

Physical abuse is another form of abuse that can have a devastating impact on older Americans. In fact, older Americans who experience physical abuse reportedly have a 300 percent greater chance of dying sooner.

Many older Americans may also face emotional abuse. According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, common examples of emotional abuse include treating an elder like an infant, isolating an elderly person from his or her loved ones or regular activities, and giving an older person the "silent treatment."

I have also recently become aware of instances of seniors in nursing homes who were unknowingly photographed in embarrassing and compromising situations. These photos or videos wind up on social media outlets, such as Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram, simply so a depraved individual can get a few cheap laughs or attention.

I sent a letter to the Attorney General and the Health and Human Services inspector general on this very issue earlier this year because it remains unclear to me what specifically is being done on a Federal level to stop this form of abuse.

I have sent letters to Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram to better understand what efforts they have taken to help prevent this form of abuse of nursing home residents. And I wrote to the American Health Care Association to inquire about the efforts, if any, that nursing homes have taken to prevent this activity.

I also recently called upon the Justice Department to detail the steps it is taking to protect seniors from financial exploitation. I have asked the Department what it is doing to combat government imposter scams that are bilking millions of dollars out of the pockets of older Americans.

Combating elder abuse and exploitation requires all of us to work together in a bipartisan way. To this end, I will convene a Judiciary Committee hearing later this month on the subject of elder financial exploitation.

This hearing will give us a chance to examine whether the Federal Government is doing all it can to prevent older Americans from being victimized and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. We also will hear from State officials on how to best educate older Americans about the ever-changing forms of elder abuse and financial exploitation.

Local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies are on the front lines in responding to crimes of elder abuse. For this reason, I would like to take a moment to highlight the efforts of the many adult protective service units, local prosecutors, and other practitioners across the country who have helped bring the perpetrators to justice.

I would also like to recognize family, friends, and caretakers who report instances of elder abuse and help their communities better understand the nature of this problem.

In closing, I invite my colleagues to use World Elder Abuse Awareness Day as an opportunity to highlight the problem of elder abuse and to rededicate efforts to protect our Nation's seniors. These men and women are our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, mentors and friends. They are the fabric of our country and communities, our greatest generation, and we owe it to them to protect their dignity in their golden years.

Thank you.

#### REMEMBERING GEORGE VOINOVICH

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, George Voinovich served in this body as the Senator from Ohio from 1999 until 2010. Senator Voinovich was a friend of mine, and I think our colleagues would agree with me that he was among the most respected members of this body. He was respected for his thoughtfulness, for his humility, for his self-effacing nature.

It is sometimes said that the Senate is composed of 100 prospective Presidents of the United States, each of whom is just waiting for the American people to recognize their unappreciated talents. That concept did not apply to George Voinovich. It is not that he was not well prepared to assume the highest office in the land; George Voinovich simply chose to make his contribution in a different way.

George Voinovich was one of the most prepared people ever to serve in the Senate. He was responsible for the turnaround of the city of Cleveland; elected as a Republican mayor in a Democratic town. He served as Lieutenant Governor and Governor the State of Ohio. He was elected by his peers first to the role of president of the National League of Cities and subsequently to chair the National Governors Association.

In the Senate, he contributed significantly to the work of the Foreign Relations Committee, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, the Environment and Public Works Committee, and the Appropriations Committee.

This was a "workhorse" not a "show horse." For a politician, he was deliberately the "unpolitician." An individual who built a reputation on his efforts and accomplishments and not on his press releases. Approachable and grassroots as they come, which is especially an admirable quality in one who represents a large State. It bears repeating: "a self-effacing and humble man."

George Voinovich was one of the most principled people ever to serve in this body. He was profoundly independent in his thinking. He was frugal in both his policy and in his personal